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**WTO MEETINGS SUCCESSFUL IN
SETTING AGENDA FOR AGRICULTURE NEGOTIATIONS**

The WTO Committee on Agriculture met in special session in Geneva last week to initiate the mandated negotiations on agriculture that began this year as part of the WTO's built in agenda. Last week's meeting focused on procedural and scheduling matters necessary to allow the negotiators to move forward with the talks. Despite some difficulties in choosing a chairman, the Committee agreed on a work plan for the coming year, a schedule of meetings, and an end of the year deadline for countries to submit negotiating proposals.

"We accomplished what we set out to do by agreeing to move forward with an agenda and established deadlines to ensure that countries seriously engage in the negotiations," said Ambassador Charlene Barshefsky.

"We are moving forward with WTO agriculture negotiations and that means we are closer to improving market access for U.S. farm products," said Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman.

The Administration hopes to submit a proposal in the next few months. A Federal Register notice will be published this week soliciting input on agriculture negotiations with a deadline for submission by May 12th, 2000.

Meetings are scheduled for June, September and November of this year and will focus on issues brought forward by members ranging from conceptual papers to comprehensive negotiating proposals. Next year, a meeting is scheduled for March to allow the negotiators to assess proposals and prepare for the intensified negotiations. The chair has the discretion to call additional meetings as the negotiations progress. Additionally, the WTO Secretariat was charged with performing analytical work that will help focus negotiating issues for members.

